

Testimony of John W. Betkoski III

Nominee for Commissioner of the Department of Public Utility Control

Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee

March 11, 2009

Good Afternoon Chairperson Looney, Chairperson Janowski, Ranking Member McKinney, Ranking Member Piscopo and distinguished members of the Committee. I am humbled to appear before you today to be nominated by Governor Rell for another term as a Commissioner of the Department of Public Utility Control.

I began my service as a DPUC Commissioner in 1997 and presently serve as the Vice Chairman of the DPUC. In the years since my initial appointment our state has faced significant changes and challenges in state utility regulation. We have addressed substantial structural and systemic shortcomings and we have risen to the challenges posed by our energy future. Many critical challenges remain before the DPUC and I would be honored by the Committee's approval to continue to be a part of the team of Commissioners who work to address and solve them.

At the DPUC, my primary area of oversight as a Commissioner has been in the regulation of our states water utilities. As a cornerstone of my time at the DPUC, I have worked tirelessly to assure sufficient, safe and reliable water supply. During my tenure there have been numerous critical infrastructure upgrades, company consolidations and rate adjustments, each of which were approached with an eye toward providing our state citizens with appropriate service at the most reasonable cost possible. In addition to actions within Connecticut, I have had the opportunity to participate in and influence regional and national system planning and security, ensuring a safe, affordable and comprehensive system for our states short and long term needs.

As a DPUC Commissioner, I have played a leading role in ensuring that ratepayer costs are considered in all of our administrative proceedings. I would point to my strong support of the Water Infrastructure Conservation Adjustment Program (WICA) as once such example. In Connecticut it is common for water companies to wait as long as ten or fifteen years to do a rate adjustment case, due to the complexity and expense associated with the process. Prior to WICA, this delay would occur while numerous projects were undertaken by the companies for which they were entitled to reimbursement by ratepayers. The unfortunate result of the delay by the water companies, in many cases, was a staggering rate increase for rate payers when all of the previously un-reimbursed projects were included the rate adjustment. Through the adoption of the WICA program by the legislature, we are now able to approve small rate adjustments for water companies, without the need for a full rate adjustment case, preventing rate shocks that stunned ratepayers in the past.

I would also point to my unsuccessful efforts to modify the final decision in the 2006 UI rate case, where the majority sought to phase in a 52% increase over six months. My proposal would have phased the increase in over three years in an effort to soften the blow of considerable rate-shock. While my efforts left me in the minority in that case, I have continued to advocate for the proposition that ratepayers and their ability to pay their bills must take a central role in the agencies thinking when deciding cases.

Another area of my focus as a DPUC Commissioner has been in the area of energy conservation. As the lead commissioner for DPUC electricity conservation programs, I have worked tirelessly with my other Commissioners, utility companies, legislators, state and federal agencies and stakeholders to create

a menu of incentives, information resources and infrastructure that has placed Connecticut as the national leader in conservation efforts.

Today we find ourselves in a position where we are finally seeing the pay-off after years of investment in conservation. Electricity demand is down and rates in Connecticut are beginning to decrease. Electricity congestion charges and the federal penalties associated with it are decreasing and the focus on conservation and conservation technologies as a vital component of our energy future has expanded from Connecticut to the federal level. For those of you unfamiliar with the scope and depth of what we have accomplished and what is available to Connecticut residents in the area of conservation, I encourage you to visit our agencies sponsored website at www.Ctenergyinfo.com.

It has never been clearer that energy-related issues and costs will grow and become more acute in these demanding financial times. Our utilities are facing a multitude of new challenges resulting from restructuring and competitive markets. As we proceed, I would respectfully suggest that my years of experience and knowledge of the utility field as well as my ten years representing the people of Ansonia, Beacon Falls and Seymour in the Connecticut General Assembly would be an asset to the state in facing the forthcoming challenges.

Should this Committee and the General Assembly vote favorably to approve my reappointment for another term as a DPUC Commissioner, I am committed to continuing the states work of providing critical utility services to our citizens at a reasonable and affordable price for consumers. I appreciate your consideration and would welcome any questions you may have regarding my candidacy.

John W. Betkoski
Vice-Chairman DPUC